

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



Reserve  
aQL84  
.22  
.W6R47  
1993

# Inspecting and Protecting Sensitive Wildlife Species



*Wab Claus*



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

PREPARED BY  
Forest  
Service

Nicolet  
National  
Forest

## Respecting and Protecting Sensitive Wildlife Species



### The American Bald Eagle

So majestic is this bird that it was chosen as our Nation's symbol. Once near the brink of extinction due largely to the use of pesticides and a lack of protection for its nesting territories, the American bald eagle has staged a remarkable come back throughout much of its original range, including Wisconsin's North Woods.

Their graceful, soaring flights are inspiring for residents and visitors alike. Fortunately for all of

us, it is no longer uncommon to see these beautiful birds in the North Woods.

Eagle nests are also impressive. Some measure up to six feet in diameter and weigh a ton. Eagles generally build their huge stick nests near the tops of tall pines in secluded areas. If you find an active nest, remember there are times when any disturbance can be harmful to a mating pair, their eggs, or their young. The critical time is from the beginning of April to the middle of July, when the adults are incubating eggs and raising young.

A disturbance during this time can cause adults to leave their nest and temporarily abandon their eggs or young. If incubation is disrupted for a long enough time, the eggs may not hatch.

When downy eaglets hatch in mid-May, they are vulnerable to the effects of weather. The protection and warmth provided by the adults is critical for the first two to three weeks of life. It is important to avoid disturbing nesting sites and the adult eagles during this time.

Eagles require large territories normally isolated from human activity. For the most part, they need privacy to successfully raise their young. However, eagles, like humans, have unique personalities and some nest near areas of human use.



## The Common Loon

The common loon is a large, distinctive bird with black and white plumage and red eyes. Loons

are a fixture of the North Woods, their haunting call closely associated with our ideal of wilderness. Although they are regularly seen in the North Woods, they are not as common as their name implies. In fact, most lakes, unless they are very large, will have only one pair of loons in residence.



Loons, like eagles, require privacy when mating, nesting, and rearing their young. The critical period is from late May to the middle of July. During this time, try to stay a considerable distance away from adult loons and their nests. When disturbed, an adult loon may leave its nest and expose its eggs or young to uncertain weather or predators.

When approached on water, an adult loon may stand upright and call urgently. This is a sign of extreme distress and may mean the loon has a nest nearby. Leaving the area quickly will calm the bird.

Newly hatched chicks often ride on their parent's back. This may serve both to conserve energy needed for growth and protect the chicks from predators. Older chicks often swim close to the adult. If separated from their parents--by a boater, for example--the chicks may drown or be attacked by a predator. An especially critical time for young loons is during the Fourth of July holiday period, when the chicks are typically one or two weeks old.



## The Osprey

Ospreys, also called fish hawks, are large raptors that usually nest near water and feed exclusively on fish. Because of their size, coloration, and soaring flight, they are often mistaken for eagles when seen from a distance. Ospreys usually build their large stick nests on top of tall dead trees. They also readily accept artificial nesting platforms placed atop poles or trees that have been topped.

Ospreys are especially sensitive to human disturbance from the middle of April to the end of June, when they are mating and raising young. If disturbed adults will leave the nest, exposing the eggs or young to danger, until the disturbance has passed.



## Other Raptors--The Woodland Hawks

Several species of hawks living and nesting in the North Woods require protection from human disturbance during critical times.

*Northern goshawks* are rare birds that nest in isolated hardwood areas. These attractive birds can be especially defensive in protecting their nests and young. When approached too closely, they become excited and protest with a loud call. Taking to the air, they will attempt to drive off intruders by swooping down--talons extended--and dive bombing them. Goshawks can be identified by their white-tipped tails, slate-blue upper parts, tail feathers with four or five dark bands below, and light gray breasts.

*Red-tailed hawks* are quite common in the North Woods and typically nest near large open areas. While not as defensive as goshawks, red-tails enjoy their privacy too. When camping in the North Woods, be careful not to disturb their nesting sites. Red-tails have a distinctive, loud call. The tail of the adult is rounded and red above. They are dusty gray above with lighter wings and white underneath.

*Red-shouldered hawks* are rare raptors that normally nest in remote riparian areas. These hawks feed mostly on small frogs, snakes, and insects. Red-shouldered hawks can be identified by their reddish shoulders and bellies and the four or five white and black bands across their tails. They appear uniform from beneath, but from above, they show a white spot just behind a dark streak near wing tips.

## Baby Animals Need Parents Too

It is not uncommon to find a young animal that appears to have been abandoned by its parents. At such times our instinct for kindness takes over, and we are tempted to rescue the infant by taking it with us. *However, wild animals are rarely abandoned by their parents.*





While rescuing an "abandoned" animal may be done with good intentions, wildlife experts recommend against it for several reasons. First, in all likelihood, the young animal has not been abandoned. Its parents may be foraging for food nearby and will return as soon as it is safe.

Second, the young one--whether it is a cuddly fox kit or a cute little raccoon--is a *wild animal*, and it will grow up to be an adult wild animal. These animals do not make good pets; as adults they may be destructive, dangerous, and carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans.

Finally, it is illegal to keep wild animals as pets.

If you find a young animal and you know the adult is not returning, contact the nearest wildlife rehabilitation center, a local Wisconsin Department

of Natural Resources office, or a Forest Service wildlife biologist. If you are uncertain about the animal's condition, it is best to leave it alone.

## Wildlife Sightings

There are several species of wildlife that live in the North Woods, but because of low populations or their secretive natures, they are rarely seen by people. If you are fortunate enough to see a moose, lynx, bobcat, cougar, timber wolf, or pine marten, we would like to hear about it. Call, write, or visit any Forest Service office and let us know the species, where and when you saw it, and any comments about its physical appearance, size, and what it was doing.

Contact:



1022278321



*It is the policy of the Forest Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, not to discriminate in employment or program services for reasons of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, or disability. Persons believing they have been discriminated against in any Forest Service related activity should write to: Chief, Forest Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Washington, D.C. 20250.*